

COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 12, 2001 (BOS Mtg. 9/18/01)

TO: York County Board of Supervisors

FROM: James O. McReynolds, County Administrator

SUBJECT: Application No. UP-580-01, Williamsburg Players, Inc.

ISSUE

This application seeks a major amendment to a Special Use Permit, pursuant to Section 24.1-115(d)(3) of the York County Zoning Ordinance, to authorize the expansion of the James-York Playhouse, located at 200 Hubbard Lane approximately 760 feet north of the intersection of Hubbard Lane (Route 716) and Penniman Road (Route 641). The property is further identified as Assessor's Parcel No. 10-37.

DESCRIPTION

- Property Owner: The Williamsburg Players, Inc.
- Location: 200 Hubbard Lane
- Area: 3.14 acres
- Frontage: Approximately 293 feet on Hubbard Lane (Route 716)
- Utilities: The property is served by public water and sewer.
- Topography: Moderate to severe slopes and a ravine are present to the rear of the parcel
- 2015 Land Use Map Designation: General Business
- Zoning Classification: R13 – High-Density Single-Family Residential
- Existing Development: James-York Playhouse
- Surrounding Development:
 - North: None
 - East: Single-family detached residences across Hubbard Lane
 - South: Bruton Fire Station and Magruder Elementary School
 - West: Mini-storage warehouse facility (under construction) and James-York Plaza Shopping Center
- Proposed Development: A 9,000-square foot building addition with 77 additional parking spaces.

CONSIDERATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

1. On August 18, 1977, the Board adopted Resolution No. R77-201 approving Application 77-UP14 to authorize a Special Use Permit establishing the James-York Playhouse on Hubbard Lane. The playhouse is operated by the Williamsburg Players, a nonprofit organization providing community theater for the greater Williamsburg area and the surrounding Hampton Roads region. When the use permit was approved, the property was zoned R1 for residential use, and the use permit was granted for a "community facility." Since 1977 there have been major changes to the Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Map, but the property is still zoned for residential use (R13). Although "community facilities" are no longer identified as a use in the Zoning Ordinance, there is an equivalent use ("Meeting halls, recreational, social uses, or private clubs operated by social, fraternal, civic, public or similar organizations") which would apply to the playhouse. Such uses are permitted in the R13 zoning district with a special use permit.
2. The James-York Playhouse is a 3,718-square foot building originally built and operated as a church. The site was upgraded in 1998 with the paving of the previous gravel parking lot, which was approved by the Board of Supervisors as a minor expansion. The Williamsburg Players have grown in popularity over the years such that they have outgrown the existing playhouse and wish to expand. Approximately 60% of the Players' 3.14-acre site is undeveloped, so there is plenty of room for expansion. A 9,000-square foot building addition is planned, along with the addition of 77 parking spaces to the existing 42-space parking lot. This represents a 142% increase in floor area and a 112% increase in total lot coverage. Pursuant to Section 24.1-115(d)(3) of the Zoning Ordinance, any enlargement of a special use that involves at least a twenty-five percent (25%) increase in either total lot coverage or floor area is considered a major amendment and is subject to the same procedures applicable to the issuance of an original use permit. Accordingly, this application is being treated as a major amendment.
3. The Comprehensive Plan designates this area for General Business development, yet the property is zoned R13 for high-density single-family residential development. Located between a playhouse and a mini-storage warehouse facility (currently under construction) and lacking public road frontage, the property has little or no potential for residential development; however, the R13 zoning provides a safeguard to prevent more intensive commercial uses in what is largely a residential area. Surrounding development includes community facilities (Bruton Fire Station and Magruder Elementary School), mini-storage (under construction), and, across Hubbard Lane, the Nelson Circle single-family subdivision.
4. Since the entire expansion is to the rear of the parcel, existing homes on Hubbard Lane will not be affected by any increase in outdoor lighting or noise. The only noticeable impacts on the neighborhood would likely be the increase in traffic on Hubbard Lane. Accordingly, the applicant has submitted a traffic impact analysis, the findings of which are discussed below.

The Williamsburg Players' annual season typically consists of five or six plays with 14 to 18 performances of each over a 4-5 week period. The schedule has changed over the years, but for the upcoming 2001-02 season, the Players' productions will take place Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8:00 PM with additional matinee performances at 2:00 PM on Saturdays. The playhouse is also used for rehearsals, pre- and post-production activities, and various special events, but only the actual performances generate significant traffic. According to the traffic study, the playhouse expansion will generate an estimated 132 additional vehicle trips (66 entering and 66

exiting) on Hubbard Lane in those afternoons and evenings during which performances are being conducted. This is based on the proposed 250-seat capacity of the theater and an assumed vehicle occupancy load of two persons per vehicle. Because plays are only in the evening and on weekend afternoons, neither peak-hour traffic nor school bus traffic on Hubbard Lane will be affected by playhouse operations. With approximately 3,400 vehicles per day (vpd), Hubbard Lane currently operates at slightly over one-third of its capacity and, even with a projected 70% increase in background traffic (i.e., traffic not generated by the playhouse) over the next fifteen years, will still be operating at less than half its capacity at least through the year 2015. Clearly Hubbard Lane has sufficient excess capacity to accommodate the additional 132 trips that will be generated by the playhouse expansion.

The traffic study includes a Level of Service (LOS) analysis of the intersection of Hubbard Lane and Penniman Road to determine the impact of playhouse-generated traffic on this intersection. Level of Service is a traffic engineering concept designed to provide a “qualitative measure that incorporates the collective factors of speed, travel, time, traffic interruptions, freedom to maneuver, safety, driving comfort and convenience, and operating costs provided by a highway facility under a particular condition.”¹ Although the PM peak hour of the playhouse falls outside of the PM peak hour of the adjacent street (4:00-6:00 PM), the applicant’s traffic consultant applied the playhouse’s peak-hour trip generation to the PM peak hour traffic volumes for Hubbard Lane and Penniman Road. Consequently, the resulting LOS analysis represents a “worst-case” scenario from a traffic standpoint since the theater patrons arrive between 7:00 and 8:00 PM and depart after 10:00 PM. Even so, the projected traffic impacts are negligible, with a continued LOS A (free flow) and only a slight increase in average intersection delay from 1.4 to 2.0 seconds per vehicle.

5. The property abuts Magruder Elementary School and Bruton Fire Station to the south. Because showtimes at the playhouse do not coincide with school hours, I believe the playhouse expansion will not have any adverse impact on school operations, and the School Division has indicated that it does not oppose the application. Magruder Elementary is also the site of several school/County athletic fields, including a softball field located adjacent to the proposed playhouse expansion. Because this unlighted field is used only in the daytime, and because of the distance between the field and the playhouse (over 400 feet from home plate to the expanded parking lot), I believe that the two uses are compatible with each other. County Parks and Recreation staff has indicated that expansion of the playhouse will not conflict with use of the softball field. With regard to the fire station, the Department of Fire and Life Safety has indicated that it has no concerns about the application.
6. The resolution approving the use permit in 1977 established three conditions, all of which have been met by the Williamsburg Players and none of which precludes expansion or enlargement of the use. These conditions 1) require that the Players file an affidavit of the organization’s non-profit status, 2) limit the use to theatrical productions and civic, cultural, educational, and religious activities, and 3) require on-site parking at a minimum ratio of one space per three seats.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

¹ Institute of Transportation Engineers, Transportation and Traffic Engineering Handbook (2nd Edition), 1982, p. 472.

The Planning Commission considered this application at its regular meeting on August 8 and, subsequent to conducting a public hearing at which only the applicant spoke, voted 5:0 (Mr. Hendricks and Ms. White absent) to recommend approval.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDATION

The Williamsburg Players make an important contribution to the performing arts in Hampton Roads. In so doing, the Players are an asset to the community and provide a valuable cultural amenity that is not widely available elsewhere in the County. The playhouse is a good example of a nonresidential use located harmoniously in a largely residential area. The site can accommodate the proposed expansion without adverse impacts on either surrounding properties or the County's roadway network. For these reasons, I recommend that the Board approve this application subject to the conditions contained in proposed Resolution No. R01-152.

Carter/3337

Attachments

- Zoning Map
- Vicinity Map
- Sketch Plan
- Project Summary
- Resolution R77-201
- Proposed Resolution No. R01-152